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Ancient Egyptian Civilization

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Ancient Egyptian Civilization

According to Cole (2018), Egyptian civilization mainly developed along the Nile since the annual flooding along the river banks ensured consistent rich soil for crop cultivation. The frequent struggles for Egypt's political control displayed the significance of the area's economic resources and agrarian production. Additionally, Egyptians created wide-ranging trade networks along the Red Sea, Nile and the Near East. This paper highlights the ancient Egyptian civilization from early Egypt to the intermediate period.

Egypt's history had three kingdom eras namely old, middle and new kingdom separated by short intermediate periods. This was because, during this period, Egypt lacked unison as a political power hence lied between powerful empires. However, before the old kingdom era, Egypt was already laying the foundation of civilization over a longer period since people residing along the river Nile mainly concentrated on sedentary agriculture. This practice led to generalized non-agricultural economic activity and urbanization. Although there are no specific dates of events Basak (2020) claims that around the year 3100 BCE, Egypt was politically united by a leader named Narmer after he seized control of the lower and upper region of Egypt. Later after this political alliance, divine kingship was embraced and firmly established in Egypt.

Notably, Egyptians believed that political leaders were a living manifestation of gods and held their power in the gods' favor. For instance, the political alliance myths that developed, Narmer was depicted as a god known as Horus in the Lower region of Egypt. He overturned the rule of Set, a god in the Upper region of Egypt. It is during this period that the Egyptians began using hieroglyphics (Robins, 2008). This was a writing form that used images to express meanings and sounds. The Egyptian state was able to rally resources for larger projects as it grew in influence and power. Additionally, they also began writing literature during the rule of this

kingdom. Some of the writings were preserved on papyrus, a product that resembled paper and on clay and stone.

Egypt had unison as a single state during the old kingdom era. Their military expanded significantly and gained complexity. The first pyramids were built by the rulers who served during this time. The pyramids served both as monuments and tombs for the kings who built them (Week 2 lecture 101). For that reason, a centralized government was required during this period to command massive resources such as the construction of monumental architecture, for example, the Sphinx in Giza and the Great Pyramid together with the shrines built for the diverse gods.

Contrastingly, the middle kingdom era unified Egyptians as kings' devised ways of seizing power from regional governors. Thus, kings kept creating armies that were well trained during this era moving forward. However, according to Mark (2018), Hyksos appeared during 1650 BCE and took advantage of previous administrative instability in the region. Hyksos was a Semitic tribe speaking a dialect rooted in Middle East, indicating they were not natives from Egypt. They enforced their administrative leaders and introduced innovations and cultural changes such as pottery techniques, bronze artifacts, horses and chariots. Khan Academy (n.d), proposes that about 1550 BCE the New Kingdom era began with the restoration of centralized political rule and the expulsion of Hyksos. During this period, Hatshepsut, a famous female ruler, commissioned trade networks that built Egypt's wealth. She initiated building projects and the remarkable mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. As a result, pharaoh referring to the king's fortress was transformed into a form of addressing the king.

Pharaohs were linked with Amun-Ra, god of the sun, but still recognized additional deities religiously. During the mid-1300s BCE, a particular pharaoh chose to worship Aten, the

sun god, solely and also transformed his name to Akhenaten to appease the god (Mark, 2018). Mark (2018) further argues that this was the initial step towards the belief in a single god known as monotheism. Nonetheless, the change never lasted past this king's leadership. The new rule reached the greatest of its power during pharaohs Ramesses II and Seti I. They fought to increase Egyptian power against the northern Hittites and the western Libyans.

In conclusion, although Egypt was a powerful empire, the war was inevitable and they sometimes suffered. War increased civil unrest, drought, famine, and corruption eventually disjoining Egypt. The Nubian kingdom of Kush from the south seized this unrest, concurred and united, Kush, Upper and Lower Egypt together. Later, Assyrians drove out the Kushites off Egypt in 670 BCE and established a self-governing political state but paid homage to a powerful state (Khan Academy, n.d). Around 656 BCE, Egypt freed itself from Assyrian rule. They went through a period of prosperity and peace up to 525 BCE after defeat by the Persian king Cambyses and assumed the title of pharaoh alongside the king of Persia for himself.

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